

The Hunt for the Man In the Long Black Zil

By Dana Priest and Bill Dedman
Washington Post Staff Writers

Mikhail Gorbachev's proclivity to jump from his motorcade without notice has stirred an almost primal desire in downtown Washington to be there when he does.

Twice yesterday afternoon, after leaving his formal setting at the White House and then the Soviet Embassy, the Soviet leader's caravan rolled through the crowded streets. At lunchtime and again at rush hour, a wave of screams and loud applause followed it, as did some well-dressed office workers who gave chase on foot.

It was, as Lynn Uphoff of Peoria, Ill., described it, "a great Easter egg hunt."

Stephanie Perry, 24, of Alexandria, was among those who got what she was looking for. She shook hands with Mikhail and Raisa Gorbachev near McPherson Square. "I think he's great because he's definitely a PR person," she said. "He seems to be real interested in trying to change the image of the Soviet Union. That's why he gets out of the car and all."

Gorbachev often walks unannounced among his own people, too, usually when he is visiting the provinces, where the crowds are sometimes hand-picked, but occasionally in Moscow as well. During these times, he engages working people in discussions about his policies and listens to their concerns.

His handshakes with Americans, which are seen on television in the Soviet Union, play well with his constituency, said Artour Blinov, a correspondent for Izvestia, the government newspaper. "The people want to be on good terms with Americans," said Blinov. "It is a very simple feeling. To be friends. You could have an opinion about meeting with celebrities, but this part of the visit is completely noncontroversial."

According to Blinov, Gorbachev's political instincts tell him that personal contact leaves a good impression on the public, but it is also something he likes to do.

At 1:11 p.m., minutes after the Soviet president's Zil left the White House, it roared up Connecticut Avenue and stopped so quickly that the lead cars turned the corner at L Street, not knowing that Gorbachev had halted.

But the lunchtime crowd did. Office workers a few blocks away broke into a run. Cashiers and patrons at the Au Bon Pain restaurant ran outside. People closer to the scene climbed onto cars, bicycles and newspaper boxes for a better view.

They Came to See, to Touch, to Protest

VISIT, From A21

His security detail moved around him as Gorbachev walked first to the east side of the street, flanked by his interpreter as he was Thursday when he jumped from his car near the U.S. Treasury building.

"Gorbachev for World Leader!" some on the packed sidewalk yelled.

"Why don't you be our president!" another screamed.

"Mr. Gorby! Mr. Gorby!" barked others.

As he stood before the crowd, Gorbachev seemed to pick out individual people to address. He nodded and winked at an elderly man. He talked straight to Lani Murray, a clerk at the Collector's Cabinet, a curio shop.

"I called him the man of the century, because I really feel he is," said Murray, 57. "He said what they're working on [in the summit] is a coming together. He used the word hope. And he also said, 'I want to thank you.'"

He spoke to 29-year-old Marilena Ramirez, too. His hands clasped together, he told Ramirez about the "new talks moving forward," she said.

Then he turned around and crossed the street, weaving between the big black limousines and the dozens of city police motorcycles. People hung out of office windows, waving, yelling and whistling. On the ground, they reached out to touch his hands, which he held up.

On the balcony of Duke Zeibert's some patrons peered down at the Soviet leader. "Some people just sipped their wine like they'd seen it all before," said Lindsey Drennen, who was having lunch. "I said, 'I know this isn't cool, but I'm going to hang over the rail.' When you live here you get blasé about seeing famous people and senators and things, but I had tears in my eyes."

"I touched him," said David Marcus, 33, a consultant for an employee benefits firm.

"We're going to call our mothers now," said Lynn Buczak, 31, Marcus's colleague.

It happened again about 5:55 p.m. near McPherson Square at 15th and I streets NW, an hour after Uphoff and her 13-year-old son began watching the helicopters overhead for a clue to his whereabouts. They talked to media people with microphones and others on the street who were running one way or the other.

His route was indirect this time, backing up rush-hour traffic on dozens of streets for at least an hour. Frantic reporters blocked by police barricades ran up a narrow alley, through the back door of an office building and out its lobby to another street.

"He's driving me crazy!" yelled a photographer out of breath as she trudged down the street.



BY CYRENA CHANG—THE WASHINGTON POST

Daiva Bajorunas, left, and Zibute Zaparackas join Lithuanian demonstration near Soviet Embassy.

"Lock up the parking lots," police radios sounded.

"Uh-oh," the radio crackled. "We've got a problem at—it looks like he will be stopping here at H Street."

Onlookers surged towards the Soviet leader and his wife. He tried to shake hands, but gave up after a line of security police began shoving people back. Shouts and rough jostling followed.

Gorbachev stood with his hands at his side and smiled weakly. At one point, he gestured to a boom microphone held aloft by a sound technician and appeared to ask in English: "Is that on?"

When the technician nodded, Gorbachev just smiled. The Soviet president tried to engage people in conversation but the cries of "Let me shake your hand" and "Hi, Mr. Gorbachev" drowned him out.

It was the second day of the Bush-Gorbachev summit. Gorbachev began the morning in a meeting at the Soviet Embassy with a congressional delegation and ended the day with a state dinner there for Bush.

John M. Smith, of Baltimore, drove to Washington yesterday with Gorbachev's schedule in his pocket and bought a \$150 camera. His ambition was to get a photo of the Soviet leader.

A little after 1 p.m., as Gorbachev sped by in his limousine on Connecticut Avenue, his plans clicked. "I'm walking on a cloud," Smith said as he showed the snapshot to a crowd of several dozen on the Gorbachev stakeout near the Soviet Embassy.

On the steps of the Capitol, some people were not at all impressed with the Soviet leader. About 1,000 supporters of Lithuanian independence held yellow, green and red flags in the strong breeze, sang patriotic songs and demanded that the Soviet Union end its economic blockade against the country and that Bush recognize an independent Lithuanian government.

Emily Valantanas, 66, came from Chicago, home of Lithuanian American Community Inc., which organized the demonstration. She spoke angrily about the blockade. "We tried to send medicine there, and sometimes it gets through, but sometimes it doesn't," she said. "What Mr. Gorbachev is doing, he is revenging on Lithuania. It is a personal vendetta."

Lithuanian protesters have also taken to the airwaves to voice their discontent.

One television spot run by the Lithuanian World Community does not attack Gorbachev. It seeks to damn him with praise.

As the screen fills with Joseph Stalin's face, an announcer intones: "Mr. Gorbachev, you're no Joseph Stalin."

Then come scenes at the Berlin Wall and the praise continues: "Thanks to your courage, the face of Eastern Europe has changed forever."

The scene changes from joyous pictures of Lech Walesa and celebrating Lithuanians to scenes of Soviet tanks rolling through Vilnius. "... And yet Lithuania continues to hear Soviet tanks rumble . . . The occupation of Lithuania must end."

The ad ends: "Join the free world . . . and give Lithuania its rightful freedom and independence."

Mark Johnson of the Sawyer-Miller Group, a political consulting firm that produced the spot, said it was designed to show Americans they can support Lithuania and still like Gorbachev.

Scores of Lithuanians, many waving flags, posted themselves on M and L streets NW near the Soviet Embassy for Gorbachev's return from the White House late yesterday afternoon. Gorbachev's motorcade had a clear view of the protesters and it is likely he heard their shouts of "50 years is too long!" and "Free Lithuania!"

Staff writers Linda Wheeler, Dan Beyers, Carlos Sanchez, Ruben Castaneda, Keith Harriston, Nell Henderson, Sari Horwitz, Paul Duggan and E.J. Dionne contributed to this report.